Unmēsh

Newsletter of NS Kashmir Research Institute

Vol III No. 19 January-March 2000 (For Private circulation only)

ज्ञानं अन्नं

नमस्ते शारदे देवि काश्मीर पुरवासिनि



A group photograph of some eminent Sanskrit scholars of Kashmir who taught at Government Sanskrit Pathshala, Srinagar in the year 1908 (C.E.)

Photo Courtesy : Mr. Shiv Nath Hundoo

उन्मेष

To Our Readers

This issue of "Unmesh" will reach your hands after quite a long interval We regret the inordinate delay, but aver that this is due to reasons well beyond our control, not the least of them being the financial difficulties which our Institute continues to face despite all the appeals we made to people concerned about preserving our heritage and promoting our culture to help us out. True, there were some who realized the urgency and importance of the work we are doing and came forward with their generous co-operation. But the task we have undertaken is so stupendous that it requires a constant inflow of huge funds. As we do not have access to any funding agency as yet, governmental or otherwise, we found the going rather difficult.

Funding, however, is only a part of what we consider important for achieving the objectives we have set before ourselves. We want our readers to sit up and ponder over the issues we try to raise and the questions we pose, providing us the feedback very much needed to sustain and support a culture in exile. Unfortunately, this is what has not been forthcoming except, perhaps, in a very small measure. We would like animated discussions and debates so that we could give a momentum to the movement we have launched. We would like everyone to understand that NSKRI is not just an organisation but a catalytic force that could well bring about a renaissance of ideas in a culturally atrophied society.

As for 'Unmesh', we assure you that we will do our best to bring it out as regularly as possible, for we know about your eagerness, bordering an impatience sometimes, to receive your copy of every issue of the newsletter for the food for thought that it alone can provide. We are happy to inform you that from the next issue itself we are starting new features, including a column titled "Let Us Learn Sharada". Through this column we will endeavour to give basic lessons in the alphabet of this important script in which almost all our ancient texts are written. Its knowledge is essential for us if we want to have access to the wisdom and knowledge of our ancestors and the traditions they gave shape to. We hope you will appreciate this venture of ours.

We would also like to inform you that in the meanwhile NSKRI has been registered with the Registrar of Societies, Government of India.

— **Editor**

JAMMU CHAPTER OF NSKRI OPENED

A chapter of the NS Kashmir Research Institute was opened in Jammu recently at a meeting of intellectuals and cultural activists organised by Prof B. L. Fotedar, a founder member of the Institute. Dr. M. K. Teng, Prof. Mohan Lal Kaul, Dr. Ajay Chrangoo were among those who participated in the meeting besides NSKRI representatives Prof. Fotedar, Mr. Moti Lal Kemmu and Dr. S. S. Toshkhani.

The Jammu Chapter of NSKRI is expected to reach out to the bulk of the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora which is at present concentrated in Jammu, fulfilling a long-felt cultural need. It was felt at the meeting that dedication to a well thought out cultural agenda was necessary for the exiled and the besieged community to maintain a strong sense of identity as culture alone could define it as a distinct social and ethnic entity. The Pandits, it was emphasized during the discussion by Dr. S. S. Toshkhani, would have to recreate their self-image as inheritors of a proud heritage and not a beaten people of history. It is they who constituted the mainstream of Kashmir's indigenous culture despite their numbers which kept on dwindling over the centuries due to frenzied proselytizing. They must be made aware of their intellectual, artistic and literary attainments which have played an important role in shaping the Indian mind, the NSKRI Chairman said. Deliberate attempts were being made to distort the facts of Kashmir's cultural history in order to make it Muslim-centric without any cultural counter-statements to challenge the falsifications. He explained the salient features of the agenda chalked out by NSKRI in this regard.

Dr. M. L. Kaul, a well-known scholar who has authored two widely acclaimed books on Kashmir, agreed and referred to Pandits' all-important contribution in the fields of Indian aesthetics and philosophy. Dr. Kaul stressed that every effort should be made to set right the distortions that have been introduced and present a true and correct picture of Kashmiri intellectual life to which the Pandits have richly contributed in giving it its shape and content.

Mr. M. L. Kemmu emphasized the need for an action-oriented agenda to create a real and forceful impact on the cultural front. Idle discussions, he said, would lead us nowhere and would in no way help us to overcome that seems to have seized our intellectuals.

Dr. M. K. Teng, a leading political thinker and analyst whose views on protecting the "Sanskrit Himalayas" from cultural and political onslaughts set intellectuals throughout the country thinking, emphasized the importance of working out a clear and effective cultural strategy. This was necessary, he said, in the context of the circumstances that have turned Kashmir into a marked arena of a civilizational clash. The outcome of this clash was going to be crucial not only for Kashmir and Kashmiri Pandits but for the whole of India and the world. Appreciating the work the NSKRI was doing on the cultural front, Dr. Teng said, that a proper methodology had to be evolved for achieving a new cultural renaissance among the Pandits. Some of the very basic assumptions had to be analysed and questioned, he said, and conceptual frameworks restructured to arrive at credible and unambiguous standpoints.

Summing up and steering the discussion to its conclusion, Dr. Ajay Chrangoo said that the political and cultural dimensions of the Kashmiri Pandits' struggle to preserve their identity were complementary to each other. In Jammu there was a greater need to spread the movement for a cultural renaissance, he observed, as the main body of the Kashmiri Pandits lived there. Dr.Chrangoo underlined the importance of coordination of efforts in this direction with the NSKRI providing the intellectual inputs from Delhi and the culturally-conscious members of the community from Jammu helping to give the movement a dynamic push in properly chosen thrust-areas.

Prof. B. L. Fotedar's suggestion that a Jammu Chapter of NSKRI should be set up to facilitate this process of coordination and cooperation received unanimous acceptance at the meeting. Prof. Fotedar assured that he would undertake organisation and activisation of the Jammu Chapter of NSKRI in a manner that would give it the footing it needs to project its agenda and objectives.

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Book - 1051

[illegible] and



To

Shri S. S. Toshkhani
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JAWAHAR LAL BHAT
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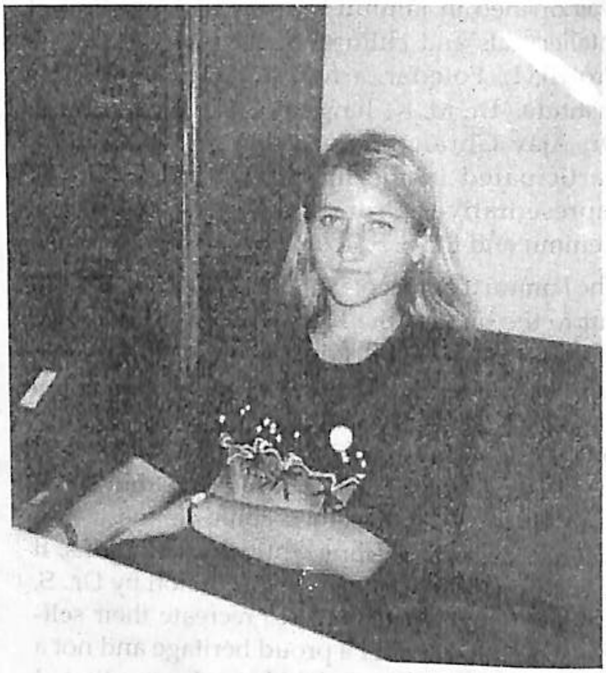
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KASHMIR SHAIVISM FASCINATES THE BELARUSIAN MIND

When in an afternoon in September 1999 Mr. M.L. Pandit, a member of NSKRI core group, recieved a telephone call from a New Delhi hotel, he was quite a bit surprised. A young female voice with a foreign accent was asking if she and her two friends could meet NSKRI scholars to discuss Kashmir Shaivism. "We come from Minsk, Belarus," she disclosed, adding, "We came to know the phone number and address of NSKRI office from the internet. We also want to be guided about Swami Lakshman Joo's disciples who live in Delhi." Mr. Pandit hurriedly summoned his NSKRI colleagues, Dr. S. S. Toshkhani and Mr. P.N.Kachru, on phone for an improptu meeting with the young foreigners who had come all the way from Minsk in their spiritual quest.

Soon the three — Ms Shlykova Iryana (23), Mr Salik Sergey (32),and Mr Sergey Olescvich (33) — were sipping delicious Kashmiri tea flavoured with cardmoms and almonds with their hosts, but perhaps enjoying the discussions even more than the tea as their reactions showed. Ms. Iryana acted as the interpreter of the group as she alone of the three could speak a little English, though haltingly. The other two guys, sat cross legged on the floor trying to follow everything that was being said. Soon it turned out to be that all of them had made a serious study of major philosophical texts of Kashmir Shaivism as well as books written on its different aspects by leading Shaiva scholars. Most of these works, including the Shiva Sutras, Parapraveshika, Bodha Panchadashika, Pratyabhijna-hridayam, Shiva-stotravali, Tantrasar and Vijnana Bhairava, had already been translated into Russian by them and their friends in Belarus.

It was interesting to see that both Mr. Salik Sergey and Mr. Olesevich Sergey had "Om Namah Shivaya" in D..anagari script and a



Shlykova Iryana

trident tattooed on their arms. Their involvement and interest in Shaivism was, however, not just skin deep but quite serious as the questions they asked about its practical aspects indicated. "What is *shaktipaat* and how can it be achieved?" was one such question that had Mr. P.N. Kachru hard time explaining.

To help the group in achieving the purpose of their visit, they were guided to Mr. S.P. Dhar, a leading devotee of the saint. Mr. P.N. Kachru had their meeting with Mr. Dhar fixed at his Palam Vihar residence where they devoted considerable time in interaction and in seeking practical guidance. Mr. Dhar made arrangements for their visit to the Ishwar Ashram at Ishber, Srinagar, which was a prominent destination on their itinerary. Before proceeding to Srinagar, the three went to see Haridwar, Rishikesh and Badrinath "for pilgrimage", and had an exhilitrating dip in the sacred Ganga.

They were greatly inspired, Ms. Iryana disclosed, by Swami Lakshman Joo's book 'Kashmir Shaivism : The Secret Supreme', which too had been translated into Russian and published. Their intrest in the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir was, however, more than merely academic as they were very eager to be guided in its practice, she said.

They and their other friends had set up the "Belarussian Spiritual Society of Shaiva-Shaktas—The Light of Kailas" at Minsk, where young persons inspired by the Swamiji's life and work, met for meditation and discussion as well as for study and research. Their main purpose to come to India was to seek spiritual guidance from Swami Lakshman Joo's disciples and they very much wanted to go Srinagar to visit his Ishwar Ashram, Ms. Iryana said. They would be happy, she added, if they could be there on the day of Swamiji's Mahasamadhi, which fell on September 28. They very much wanted to participate in Mahayajna that is held there on the occasion.



Salik Sergey and Sergey Olescvich

The trip to Ishwar Ashram, was thrilling, Ms. Iryana and the two Sergeys reported on their arrival back in Delhi. The three young neo-Shaivites had gone to Shankar Pal, high up in the forests of Dachhigam, which offered a splendid view of the Mahadeva peak. It was on Shankar Pal that the Shiva Sutras were revealed to the great sage Vasugupta. They also had ablutions in the sacred stream of Mahasaritsaras which washes the feet of the Shankar Pal.

Still in India, the Belarusian spiritual team has been keeping Mr. P. N. Kachru of NSKRI informed of its programme. According to the information given by it, the 'Belarussian Spiritual Society of Shaiva-Shaktas—The Light of Kailas'(BSSS) was founded in 1991 by Shri Aryadevacharya, one of the three leading authorities on Shaiva-Shaktism in CIS, whose original name was Sebastian Stanislavovich Salekh. It was originally named "League of Spiritual Rebirth - Sanatan Dharma" — a name under which it worked till 1997 when it was given its new name. It was established by Belarusians who were interested in yoga and eastern philosophy, particularly Shaivism and Shaktism. Its sphere of activities, which included lectures on Shaiva-Shakta philosophy and lessons on meditation, were not limited to Belarus alone, but extended to Ukraine and Russia as well.

The BSSS "The Light of Kailas" maintains contacts with several organisations propagating Shaiva-Shaktism such as the Kashmir Shaivism Fellowship, Siddha Foundation, Kashmir Overseas Association, Abhidhyana's Institute, Sankt-Peterburg Society "Pancham Veda" — and now N. S. Kashmir Research Institute.

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE OF ANCIENT KASHMIR : Distinctive Features

-- Virendra Bangroo

[Kashmir's ancient temples provide a valuable link between the Valley's past and present, telling a poignant tale of thousands of years of its history. The magnificence of these monuments explains why Kashmiris were once called 'shastra shilpin' or 'master craftsmen'. These marvels of architecture, most of them reduced to crumbling edifices now due to vandalism of fanatic iconoclasts as well as ravages of time, have fascinated art scholar and researcher Virendra Bangroo from a very young age. Delving deep into the mysteries of their artistic pecularities has been a passion which has led Bangroo to extensive tours of the ancient sites. This article was originally written as a paper to be presented at a lecture-cum-slide show which the NSKRI intended to organise, but the programme had to be postponed indefinitely for some reasons. It sheds significant light on some of the distinctive features of Kashmir's temple architecture and the high place it occupies in the history of Indian art. - Ed.]

Apart from its stunning scenic beauty and salubrious climate, Kashmir can be rightly proud of its cultural heritage which has been rich and glorious. The numerous remains of the ancient temples scattered all over the Valley are an eloquent testimony to this glory.

Standing against the backdrop of mesmerisingly beautiful mountainous scenery, the ancient stone temples of Kashmir have a grandeur that is really unique. They represent a tradition of architectural art which after absorbing influences from the best of Gandhara and Gupta art evolved its own powerful idiom and style. Literary evidences suggest that some of the earliest Kashmiri temples were built of wood, a material abundantly available in the Valley, but hardly any example of these has survived the vagaries of nature and the wrath of the invader. Later, stone came to be widely used by Hindus and Buddhists to build their places of worship. The indegeneous school of architecture that evolved over the centuries reflects the creative energy of the Kashmiri art which reached the zenith of its grandeur and glory during the time of Karkota and Utpala kings.

One of the greatest kings of the Karkota dynasty, Lalitaditya Muktapida was the mightiest conquerer Kashmir has known and also a great builder. It was during his reign in the 9th century that the indegeneous art movement in Kashmir touched great heights with the construction of the lofty temple of the Sun God at Martand which stands on the top of a plateau overlooking lush green rice fields spread over miles and miles. Even in its present ruinous condition, Martand evokes awe and wonder and is hailed as the most striking masterpiece of Hindu architecture of Kashmir, incomparable for its artistic grandeur. Lalitaditya was followed by the equally illustrious Avantivarman, who though not a conquerer, was a great patron of art and literature. He brought peace and prosperity to Kashmir that remained unbroken for a long time. He is remembered for the two magnificient temples he built at Avantipur, a town he founded, Awantishwara and Avantiswamin, one dedicated to Shiva and the other to Vishnu, their ruins spread over a long stretch along the Jammu and Kashmir highway. Though reduced to rubble now, perhaps due to earthquakes, these temples were also built of huge blocks of limestone. Their massive walls and huge engraved columns exude elegant grace, suggesting how magnificient they must have been when they were erect. During the subsequent years, with the weakening of Hindu political power in Kashmir, temple building activity started losing its gusto, resulting in the construction of smaller temples of which Thathamandi (Buniyar), Pandrethan, Mammal and Kothier are some examples. Whether massive or small, the ancient stone temples of Kashmir display certain architectural features that are common to all – like the pyramidal roof, trefoil niches and triangular pediments. Let us have a look at some of the salient features

that distinguish Kashmir's temple architecture.

1. SITE : The site is the most important factor to be condidered in temple building. The temples at Avantipur, Buniyar, Bandi, Kakapora are situated on the bank of River Jehlum. The temples at Loduv, Pandrethan, Mammal, Kothier and Narasthan are situated near springs, as springs are considered to be sacred sites. Martand, Mammal, Bumzu are situated on the slope of a mountain. The Shankaracharya temple is on the top of a hill.

2. PLAN : The Kashmir temple has an open rectangular courtyard with cells facing it as a unique architectural feature. The main temple is built at the point of intersection of the diagonals of the courtyards, usually consisting of a single chamber which stands on a single or double base. The temple has pedimented entries on four sides, three of which are often closed off for bearing niches. Externally, a facet is added on each side which is hollowed out into a trefoil niche.

The entrance is a double-chambered structure and is almost equal in dimensions to the main temple. It has a double flight of steps – one external and the other facing the temple.

The cells of the enclosing wall stand on a plinth which is similar to the base of the temple. The central cell on each of the three sides is slightly larger than the rest.

Some of the temples have subsidiary shrines, for instance, Martand, Avantipur and Tapar, which have four shrines at the four corners, called Panchyatana. The Loduv and Shankaracharya temples are circular in plan internally. Payar, Pandrethan, Tapar and Narasthan temples do not possess any cellular peristyle. The Shankaracharya temple has an octagonal range of miniature cells on its surrounding octagon-shaped walls.

3. WALLS : The walls are built of finely dressed and massive blocks of limestone. In Wangath and Buniyar temples, granite, lime- mortar as well as iron clamps have been used. The surface is often carved with the sculptured reliefs, geometrical and floral patterns, but the inner surface of the walls of the cella is kept plain.

4. CEILINGS : The ceiling of Kashmiri temples is of three types:

a. The ceiling with superimposed diminishing squares: The temple being square in dimension, four beams are arranged on four angles so as to give it the shape. On this square another square is built on the four angles. This process is repeated until a single square stone covers the whole gap at the top. The triangular spaces resulting from this construction were sculptured, bearing figures of flying Yakshas with a full blown lotus usually carved at the apex. The best example of this kind of ceiling is provided by the temple at Pandrethan. The ceiling of Garur temple and Kothier temple is also made of the superimposed diminishing squares.

b. The domical ceiling : In this type of construction a series of concentric circles of small blocks of stones are held together by mortar. The two largest temples at Wangath have ceilings of this type. The miniature shrines at Payar and Manasbal have also the domical ceiling but the dome consists of a single block of stone. This could be posible only in case of small structures.

c. In the third type of ceiling, the walls of the cella are carried up vertically until they reach the level of the eaves. The pyramid itself forms the ceiling. The temples at Narasathan and Naranthal have this type of ceiling.

5. ROOF : The roof of ancient Kashmir temples is pyramidal, surviving examples of which are found in the temples at Pandrethan, Payar and Manasbal. Due to the climatic conditions, the pyramidal roofs of the temples are sloping.

The horizontal band which divides the pyramidal roof in two is decorated with a series of dentils and metopes, as found on the temples

at Pandrethan, Payar and Manasbal. The upper pyramid is sometimes decorated with a miniature trefoil niche in the middle of each side of the pyramid. This appears to be a feature remniscent of Kashmir's early wooden architecture through which light would penetrate to lit the image and the interior.

6. COLUMNS : The most interesting and striking feature of the Kashmir temple is the majestic colonnade which surrounds it on all sides. The columns are either smooth or fluted and are composed of three separate parts viz. the base, the shaft and athe capital. The base is either plain, a square block or elaborately moulded. The shafts are plain, circular or with 12 to 24 shallow flutings, as found in the Avantiswamin and Buniyar temples. The capitals are square or bracketed and the height is usually equal to the upper diameter of the column. The bracket capital is sometimes adorned with the figures of Yakshas.

The main architectural features of the temples of Kashmir could be summed up in a nutshell as:

1. The temples face either east or west.

2. The temples have a straight-edged pyramidal roof in two tiers instead of curvilinear superstructure of the southern temples.

3. The triangular pediments enclosing trefoil niches are on all the four sides of the main shrine.

4. They have a cellular layout with a row of pillars – a feature which is not reported elsewhere in India.

5. The double-chambered gateway matches the central shrine in scale and design.
   The temple walls in Kashmir are profusely carved. The present study would be incomplete unless a brief description is given highlighting their iconographical features.

These can be briefly described as follows:

1. The ringed mace held by Vishnu and Durga is typical of Kashmir, as one finds in the temples of the Karakota and Utpala periods.

2. Garuda, the *vahana* or vehicle of Vishnu often bears a pot, but always has his wings and tail patterned in the shape of a cross.

3. The *pitha* on which idol is kept is provided with a *naala* or spout, – a common feature.

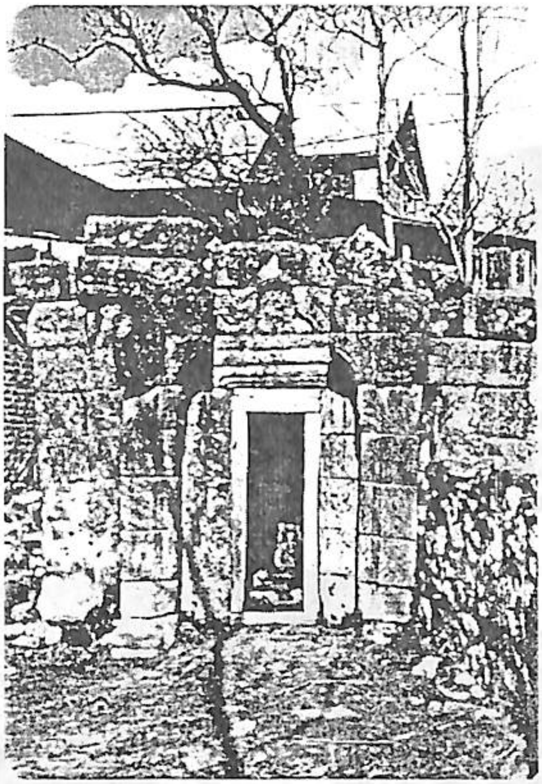
4. Shiva and Ganesha are often shown wearing a snake for the sacred thread.

5. Besides the three-moon-crescented crown, a typical three-pointed diadem came into general use from the ninth century, a feature which was later modified

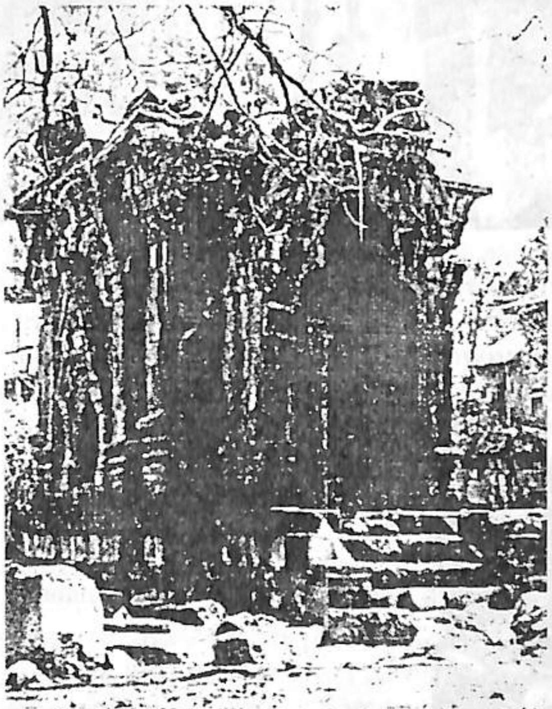
6. In metal icons, the eyes are often laid with electrum, an alloy of gold and silver.

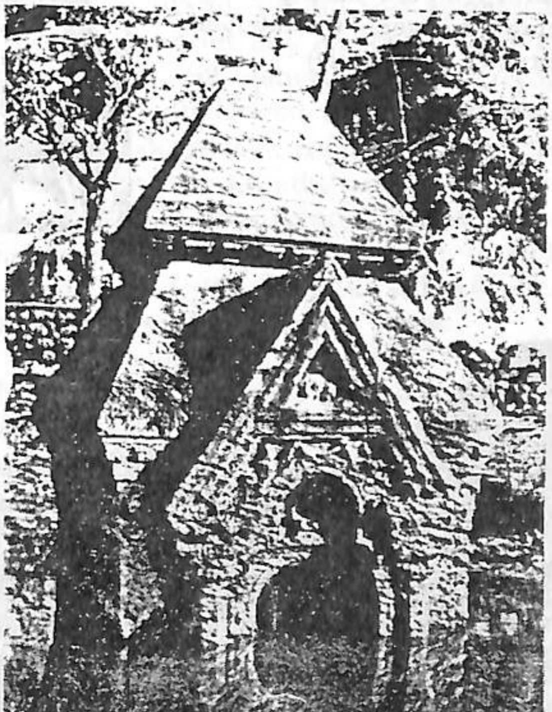
7. During the 8-9th century, Vishnu can be seen assuming three main forms:
   a. Vaikuntha, with four heads. The deity is shown with the face of a lion to the right and of the boar to the left. He is shown riding Garuda alongwith Bhu Devi.
   b. Chaturanana Vishnu with four heads, standing between Chakra Pursha and Gada Devi.
   c. Vasudeva standing.

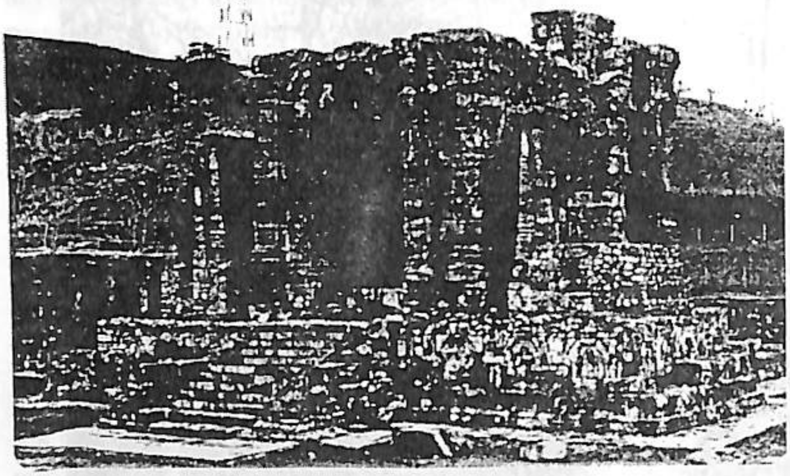
8. The coiffure and costume of the feminine deities is generally shown as follows:
   a. The rare and the top of the head are veiled by a long silk scarf, the ends of which hang loosely beside the thighs.
   b. The hair is bound in a curled bun on the sides, generally above the left shoulder.
   c. The *vanamaalaa* or classical garland is always present.
   d. Besides the necklace, a long string of pearls of the *haara* variety hangs loosely on the chest.
   e. The bracelets consist of two large bangles bordering a sequence of smaller bangles.
   f. The figures generally give a feeling of sensuousness.


The Loduv Temple - the roof has fallen and encroached upon by the locals.

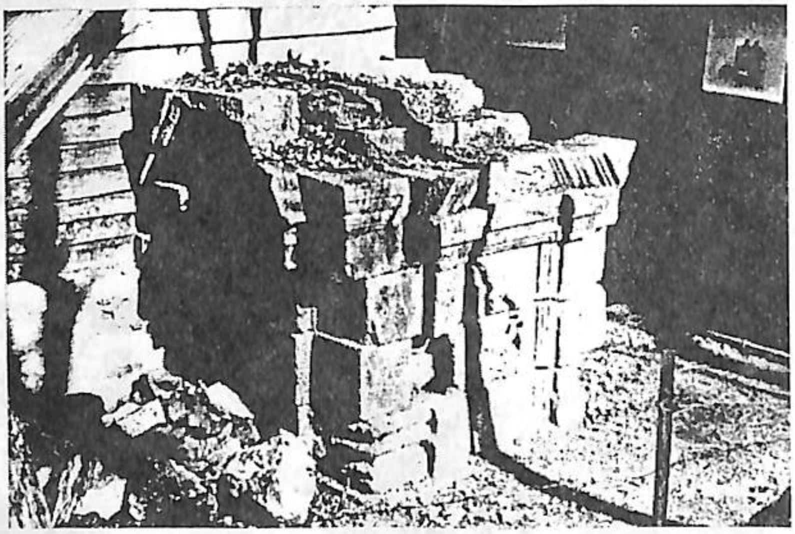

The temple at Payar, Pulwama


Narasthan Temple, Tral


Miniature Temple, Manasbal - now submerged in water.



Sanctum Sanctorum
Martand Temple



Garur Temple at Bandipore. The temple is covered by watershed entrance (not visible)



Naran Nag Temple, Sonamarg.

PROF. SRIKANTH TOSHAKHANI –

A Great Pioneer, A Profound Thinker, An Outstanding Linguist



[A towering genius of his times, Prof. S. K. Toshkhani lent the unique aura of his name to many aspects of Kashmiri intellectual life. He was a great authority on Kashmiri language and a virtual encyclopaedia of Kashmiri culture. A poineer in the real sense of the word, Prof. Toshkhani gave Kashmiri its first novel, produced and directed its first film, helped staging the first Kashmiri play and organised the first Kashmiri poetic symposium. A linguist of national as well as international repute, he went all the way from Srinagar to Gilgit and Gurez on his own in 1941 to study Shina and Dardic languages and was the first to debunk Grireson's uncritically accepted theory about Dardic origin of Kashmiri. Contarary to Grierson's views, he came to the conclusion that Kashmiri was an ancient language having Vedic and even pre-Vedic roots. But more than being just a scholar,Prof. Toshkhani was an original thinker, a great mind whose freshness of approach to questions of life left everyone who came into contact with him deeply impressed. As a social reformer, he did in Kashmir what Maharishi Karve did in Maharashtra— he unleashed the liberating power of education to emanicipate Kashmiri women. He founded institutions like the Women's Welfare Trust, Kashmir which set up schools to impart instruction to women in their mother tongue and helped them to acquire skills and crafts to over-come their economic backwardness and social disabilities. We are proud to present here a profile of this multi-faceted and fascinating personality. —Ed.]

Linguist, educationist, social reformer; thinker Prof. Srikanth Kaul* Toshkhani (SKT) was an outstanding personality of Kashmir endowed with extraordinary intellectual and moral qualities. Born at the turn of the 19th century to Pandit Zinda Kaul in downtown Srinagar, he traced his ancestry to a certain Pandit Krishna Joo Kaul who had shown exceptional courage by refusing to be converted to Islam when a murderous group of Afghans accosted him with drawn out swords and asked him to embrace Islam. Krishna Joo, SKT would fondly relate, infuriated the Afghan proselytizers by his chutzpah, but managed to escape only after losing one of his ears. Some-what similar traits of courage and fearlessness dominated the character of SKT, albeit on a little more intellectual plane, for he too refused to compromise under any cirumstances with anything that went against his ideals and convictions. His intellectual angst about social and cultural degredation of his contemporary society often found candid expression in his ideas and views. Though non-conformist and unconventional in everything that he thought and did, Prof. S.K. Toshkhani wore his Kashmiri identity with great pride.

The modern age was just dawning in Kashmir when SKT had his preliminary education at a maktab run by an "Akhun Sahib" in Khanqah-i- Maula, Srinagar, where he learnt some Persian. He soon joined a regular government school to have modern education and acquired the knowledge of science and other subjects that were being taught those days, besides learning English and Hindi. Graduating from S.P. College, Srinagar, he obtained his Masters degree in

'Kaul' was the actual surname, Toshkhani being the nickname, appended later because someone in the family was an officer-incharge of the Maharaja's Toshakhana.

Philosophy from Allahabad University and followed it up by LL.B. from Agra University. (It was at Agra that he developed friendship with Gulzari Lal Nanda, an ex- Prime Minister of the country, and the relationship lasted a life-time.) In addition to an abiding interest in philosophy and psychology, SKT had a great flair for learning languages. He self-taught himself more than half a dozen of them, including Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, besides picking up a smattering of some Indian languages. He was fascinated by the Valmiki Ramayana for its beautiful poetry and loved to quote verses from it, and also from the Mahabharata. He had also studied, apart from works of European philosophy, some of the major Upanishads and Shaiva texts of Kashmir. His interpretation of the Bhagvadgita was uniquely his own.

SKT started his professional career as a lawyer, practicing first at Anantnag and then at Srinagar, but gave it up after seven years as he was disgusted with the way lawyers tutoured witnesses to give false evidence. He then joined the Kashmir educational service, making his mark as a Professor of Philosophy at S.P. College and Amar Singh College, Srinagar. His became a conspicuous figure in the city, commuting on his bicycle from one college to the other, teaching philosophy, logic and psychology to generations of students in a manner that made them not mere passive learners of the ideas embodied in the text books but discerning seekers of philosophical knowledge. Many of his students came to occupy high positions in the state government service, and elsewhere, but always held tremendous respect for him for the values he sought to imbibe in them.

It was in the early 1920's that SKT entered public life as a social thinker and reformer who saw an essential relation between women's emancipation and social progress. In those days Kashmiri women, as women elsewhere in India, suffered from injustices and indignities, most of which were a legacy from the benighted and barbaric rule of the Afghans. They were forced to live a life of unrelieved drudgery and were treated no better than chattel, having no access to even basic healthcare facilities, not to talk of opportunities as individuals. Heavy maternal and infant mortality was a common feature in Kashmir in those days, as were child widows who led a gloomy and joyless life. Appalled by the sorry plight of Kashmiri women, which he felt was a consequence of their illiteracy and economic backwardness, SKT realized that the uplift of women "is a prerequisite for the ordered progress of a people" and recognized the role of education as "a liberating force " in breaking the traditional shackles that held them.

Deciding to fight for the improvement of Kashmiri women's living conditions and removal of their social disabilities, SKT founded the Women's Welfare Trust, Kashmir in 1926, which had for its object "to impart to them knowledge by stimulating home industry among them and by promoting their physical well-being". Interestingly, Margaret E. Cousins, the Irish lady who lead the struggle for women's enfranchisement in India and established the All India Women's Association the same year, was actively associated with the Women's Welfare Trust, Kashmir, as its Advisory Member. The great Annie Besant, of course was the guiding spirit behind the activities of the Trust which set up ten schools for girls. SKT, its founder President, himself wrote all the text books in Kashmiri on subjects as diverse as geography and arithmetic, using modified Devanagari script and ensuring that instruction in the Trust-run schools is imparted through the mother tongue. He even trained the teachers in teaching methods in the initial stages. Of these schools two, the Vasanta High School and Kashyapa High School (which were later elevated to higher secondary levels) soon came to be regarded as premiere educational institutions for women in Kashmir. Batches upon batches of girls passing out from these schools sent positive signals that had wide effects and prepared the ground for advance-

ment of Kashmiri women in all spheres of life and improvement of their position in the society.

One of the Trust's welfare programmes for Kashmiri women was the establishment of Seva Sadan, an institution which aimed at providing vocational training along with general education to widows and destitutes so as to facilitate their self-reliance and rehabilitation in the community. A well organised adult literacy programme was also launched in Srinagar, creating awareness about education through lectures and lantern shows.

A revolutionary reformer that he was, SKT produced and directed the first film in Kashmiri in 1927, again on women-related issues like widow remarriage. Well known Kashmiri stage actor Pandit Jagannath Saqi and Mr T.N. Kaul were among those who acted with SKT in the film. The film, however, could not be released for showing to the general public as the conservatives—a powerful section in the community those days —resorted to heavy stoning to stop its screening. To buy peace with them, Wakefield, the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir state, was compelled to withdraw it, and that was the last one saw of it.

SKT was a powerful orator though. Throughout the years he devoted to fighting for women's rights in Kashmir, he had to come up against a wall of prejudice, superstition and conservatism. But eventually he succeeded in breaking it and creating an awareness about them in the society. Such was the impact of the views he expressed in his speeches and articles on the subject that French newspapers like Le Monde, and also some Japanese newspapers, carried them prominently.

Prof. Toshkhani had another first to his credit. He wrote the first novel in the Kashmiri language in 1923 when Kashmiri prose was virtually non-existent. Titled 'Leela,' the novel was serialized in 'Bahar - e- Kashmir,' a trilingual community magazine published from Lahore. Written in beautiful prose, it highlighted the struggle of the Kashmiri woman against outmoded social practices that degraded her and suppressed her individuality. 'Leela' also stressed the intimate relation between women's literacy and social progress. Strangely, however, hardly anyone ever mentioned this contribution of SKT to Kashmiri literature till recent years, probably because 'Leela' was written in the Devanagri script.

SKT loved to recite the lyrics of the great Kashmiri Bhakti poet Krishna Joo Razdan. He edited and published a series of anthologies in the form of booklets titled "Shri Krishna Vani" of some of the poet's selected poems in 1927, again in the Devanagari script. Parmanand was another favourite Kashmiri poet of the Professor. Much later, he wrote two books on him for the J & K Cultural Academy, one of them jointly with Moti Lal Saqi. Another Kashmiri poet SKT admired was Master Zinda Kaul with whom he had a close personal relationship. The fact is that SKT was himself a poet of considerable talent in the days of his youth, but stopped writing poetry after the death of his second wife in 1938."Shayiri fout hui, tayari bepar hun main/ Zindagi maut hui, rah par beghar hun main" (Poetry is dead and I am now a wingless bird/ Life has turned into death and I am on the roads, without any home) was the last couplet he is said to have written. His love for Kashmiri poetry, however, did not cease - he organized the first ever Kashmiri poetic symposium at Vayil, near Srinagar, in 1940.

SKT revolutionized social thinking in Kashmir with regard to women's rights and their role in the society. He also stimulated Kashmiri intellectual life as an eminent linguist and thinker. Linguistics in fact, was his favourite hunting ground and with his deep, intensive and scientific study of Kashmiri, he came to be regarded as an authority on the language at the national as

well as international level. Trained as a phonetician personally by the President of the Phonetic Society of India in 1940, his first phonetic exercise was introduction of diacritical marks for transcribing Kashmiri vowel sounds, both in the Devanagri and Roman scripts in which he published introductory books "Achchar Zan" and 'Achhar Mal' in 1931 for those interested in learning the language.

In 1941 he travelled all the way from Srinagar to Gilgit and Gurez on his own to study some aspects of Shina and some other Dardic languages and came back fully convinced that Grierson's classification of Kashmiri as non-Sanskritic and Dardic was not at all warranted by objective facts of the language. "Dardic or Shina", he wrote later, "are Aryan languages, but the vocabulary of either while related to Sanskrit is associated with that part of the latter on which the modern Indo-Aryan languages do not draw, whereas on which Kashmiri in common with other Indo Aryan languages does depend.... Nor does Shina share with Kashmiri its umlaut system". Referring to the place that Kashmiri can claim among the modern Indo-Aryan languages, he said " To a linguist its importance can hardly be exaggerated. This lies in the first place in its antiquity which may well go back to the Vedic times if not to some period earlier still and as such it bids fair to provide the key to many a problem that baffles the linguist and the Indologist". Elucidating his observation with concrete examples, he concluded, "May it not be that further research into the morphology, phonology and semantics of Kashmiri will give one peeps into much that is hidden to the view of the past of all languages that are Aryan in origin?" He discussed this theory with the eminent kinguist Dr. Siddheshwar Verma, his guru in the field, who agreed with his views.

SKT was the sole representative of Kashmiri in the panel of linguists of the Government of India. He was the only man who represented Kashmiri at the All India Conference of Linguists convened at Deccan College, Pune, in May 1953 under the presidentship of the internationally renowned linguist Sir Ralph Turner. The conference was financed was by the Rockfeller Foundation and was attended by such eminent Indian linguists as Dr. S.M. Katre, Dr. S.K. Chatterji, Dr. W.S. Taraporewala, Dr. Baburam Saksena, Dr. Raghu Vira, Prof. T.N. Srikantaiya, Dr. Hardev Bahri, Dr. Masood Hussain Khan, Mr G.B. .Dhall, Dr. B.P. Pandit and Dr. S.G. Tulpule. Participating in the conference which was held to consider a planning project for the scientific study of Indian languages, with emphasis on the application of linguistics to the needs of language communication in post- independence India, Prof. S.K. Toshkhani lamented that "Kashmiri had next to nothing" needed for a scientific study of the language, the main difficulty being posed by the want of a proper script.

Prof. Toshkhani was consulted by the Government of India when the technical terminology for Indian languages was prepared by the Education Department. He was also appointed a member of the committee of linguistics appointed by the Ministry of Education to suggest suitable symbols to represent the various peculiar sounds of the Indian languages for transcription in the Devanagri script in 1960. In 1967 he wrote the Kashmiri portion in a book titled 'Indian Language Highway for All' prepared and compiled by Adetha P. Sita Devi, a Polish scholar and theosophist settled in India. He, along with three other scholars, translated the Constitution into Kashmiri.

Deciding to utilise his vast experience in the lingustic field and his profound knowledge of lexicography, the J&K Cultural Academy appointed him in 1967 as the Chief Editor of the first Kashmiri to Kashmiri and Urdu-Kashmiri dictionaries - a project that he completed in record time despite great difficulties created for him by some of his subordinate editors and also by some members of the so-called Advisory Board who

were chagrined over his insistence on including lexical items of Indo Aryan languages which were common heritage of all, and also over his etymologies – a field for which he had a special genius. They started a slander campaign against him in the local papers dubbing him as "a disciple of Golwalkar" for including only "Hindi" (thereby meaning chaste Kashmiri) words. They proved,however, no match for his extraordinary knowledge and expertise as a lexicographer and had to eat the humble pie in the end.They wanted him to use all the Arabic and Persian words that have ever been used by writers of Urdu. Yet in preparing the dictionaries, the professor did not shun borrowed words of Perso-Arabic origin,but preferred those that had come naturally to Kashmiri.The officially accepted Kashmiri script also "bristles with difficulties and inconisistencies" he pointed out. Yet, as a lexicographer he kept in mind what has been expressed so aptly in the Sanskrit saying : "*Koshasyev mahipanam koshasya vidushamapi /upyogo mahan yasmat kleshasten vivabhavet*", meaning "What the exchequer is to a king, a lexicon is to the scholar."

In March 1970, SKT participated in the conference on lexicography organised under the auspices of the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore. He also represented Kashmiri at the international seminar on Anthropological Linguistics held in October 1972 by Punjabi University, Patiala.

There was yet another dimension to SKT's multifaceted personality. Clad in a splotlessly white Dhoti and Kurta, he looked every bit the thinker and philosopher he was, suffused with wit and widsom. Unconventional and fresh in his outlook on life, his thinking did not fit into traditional moulds and grooves, nor did it offer any cut and dry or ready-made answers to problems. He had studied major works of eastern and western philosophical thinkers, and his interpretations of Kashmiri Shaiva texts and the Bhagvadgita was uniquely original and interesting. Yet he did not believe in any outward trammels of ritual or religion. He did not accept second hand truth as truth at all, nor did he attach any importance to what peddlers of spiritual nuggets or miracle mongers had to say. What he believed in was the redeeming power of fact as seen by a mind free from any kind of conditioning. His thinking reflected a deep influence of J. Krishnamurti's thoughts whose talks in India he attended every year almost religiously. The two, incidently were born on the same day. SKT could always be found surrounded by a host of his admirers, both Indians and Westerners who were mesmerised by his answers to their questions and with whom he would readily share his meditative insights.

Had Prof. S.K. Toshakhani been born in any other of place in India, honours and awards would have been showered upon him for his contribution as a social reformer and linguist. But having been born a Kashmiri Pandit in Muslim Kashmir, he was never accorded the recognition or the honour that was really due to him.

–S. S. T.

Error regretted

The last but fourth para on page 9 of the June-July '99 issue of 'Unmesh', (profile of Pt. Suna Bhatta Shastri) should have read as follows:

"Here, in the 'Saundarya-lahiri', only the sixty-four Bhairava-tantras have been dwelt upon by Bhagavan Shankaracharya, and Pandit Suna Bhatta Shastri, in his Sanskrit Commentary, named 'Chandrika', has eminently specified and expounded these Bhairava-tantras, besides providing an elaborate exposition of Shri Chakra, Kundalini and Parashakti." — *Ed.*

Naina Dalal (Parimoo) – Retrospective of Graphics and Exhibition of Recent Paintings

– P. N. Kachru

November '99 was really a rewarding month for art lovers of the capital.Renowned Baroda-based artist Naina Dalal (Parimoo) was in town, along with her reputed painter and art historian husband, Dr. Ratan Parimoo, for a retrospective of her graphics (1961-1999) and a show of her recent pastels and water colours. The exhibitions were held from November 13 to November 30 at Art Knosuel and Jharokha art galleries in Hauz Khas, offering a rare peep into Naina Dalal's world of art. The visitors who thronged the galleries, both connoiseurs and art enthusiasts, were overwhelmed by the artist's powerful projections of the human predicament and the subtleties of her creative skills and technique. A highlight of the occasion was the presence of the near centurian reputed artist Bahesh Sanyal among the visitors.

Educated and trained at the Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University, Baroda in the 1950's, Naina Dalal went to London in 1960 where she studied the medium of print-making, or graphics as some like to call it, under Professor Henry Trivick, specializing in lithography. The printmaking has for long remained a misnomer for the medium of graphics. But primarily the term 'graphic art' means any pictorial depiction which is linear in nature and independent of colour. It was during the movement of post-impressionism and expressionism that great masters like Tolouse-Latrec, Durer and Picasso freed the term 'printmaking' from its restrictive usage and gave the art form aesthetic dimensions in the sense in which East Asian masters of yester centuries understood it.

Naina's understanding of the art form adheres positively to this connotation. In her graphics she has experimented with a whole range of methods and techniques in a manner that brings out the "inherent artistic qualities of the medium". Inspite of the complexities of the methods she uses, Naina makes everything appear very easy. But making the complex appear simple is quite an uphill task which only a master with adequacy of technique can accomplish. Naina's experimentation is bold and her skills "subtle and submerged" and that is what makes her different from her contemporaries. Her "masterly art of understatement" delicately approaches the borders of what the great Kashmiri aesthetician Anandavardhana meant by '*Dhvani*' or the 'theory of suggestion'.

Naina's linear images are surrounded with spatial interludes, and through such spaces the figurative images suggestively emerge breaking through the formless abstract areas, where only the essentials of form and composition are retained and the rest is submerged. A sequence of linear and light effects, ranging from transparency to opacity are arranged with subtlety. Her passion for textures has led her to manouevre the print-making media for well-modulated mass and volume in figuration.

Naina is a feminist in the sense that she expresses the universality of feminine nature through the nude form, as costume would limit and localise the context. This nudity, which is so prominent, is not specifying the nudity of eroticism but universalising the nudity of anonymity. The "bench series" in her graphics symbolises human loneliness of which the female is the crucial image. The "bench" in the park is a sensitive symbolisation of loneliness where the woman is alone and alienated, but through these various permutations we see that she isn't just alone. She happens to be part of other characters, amongst which the bench is one and the bird another. Sitting on the bench she is not just a person but a "person alone".

STUDY OF ROCK ART IN LADAKH HIMALAYAS :

NSKRI to associate with Swiss scholar's work





Rock drawings, Zamthang

Mr. Martiner Vernier, a young and brilliant researcher from Switzerland has been studying art and culture of the Himalayan region for the last several years. His research is mainly focussed on the continuity of cultural practices as depicted in ancient artefacts of the region down to the present day.

Last summer, Mr. Vernier went on a long tour from Himachal Pradesh to Ladakh in pursuit of his research work, especially rock art, with another art rescarcher, Mr. Virendra Bangroo of NSKRI, accompanying him.

Born in 1970, Mr. Vernier is an art graduate from 'ECAV Cantonal School of Art', Sierre, Switzerland. He is fluent in four European languages, besides his mother tongue, French. He is also well-versed in Tibetan and Ladakhi which he has studied for eight years, and has a working knowledge of Hindi as well. Mr. Vernier has to his credit several published papers on ethnological research in the Himalayas. An artist in his own right, he has also held several solo and group exhibitions of his paintings and sculptures in different cities of Europe.

From 1995 to 1999, Mr. Vernier gave lectures on art history and Buddhist philosophy during his tour of Ladakh, guiding Western tourist groups. In 1995, Mr. Vernier studied stone scripts and flat style sculpture in Zanskar, while in 1998, he was engaged in studying rock engravings in Puktalchu Valley.

Mr. Virendra Bangroo, too, has an absorbing interest in the Himalayas. His work on Kashmir temple architecture has attracted wide attention. Participating in several expeditions, he has collected data related to archaeology, anthropology, history and ethnology.

The data collected by Mr. Vernier and Mr. Bangroo throw important light on some latent aspects of trans-Himalayan cultural traits.

This summer the duo is planning to tour the Himalayan valleys again down to Ladakh, to study rock art, documenting the past and its relation to the present. This time the NSKRI will associate itself with the study and Mr. P. N. Kachru and Dr. S.S. Toshkhani are likely to join the tour. The team will adopt a multi-disciplinary methodology in their research and their findings will likely be published by NSKRI.

Scared by the shade of a (Vibhitika) tree

This is the interesting case of a Pandit of Kashmir who got scared by the shade of a mere tree. Not because it could cause any physical harm—it looked just like any other tree. The problem lay in the Pandit's learning. He knew more about the tree than he should have. Puzzled? Well, then here is the story.

Travelling from Shadipur to Sumbal by boat, the famous German scholar George Bühler landed on an island in the Vitasta. He had gone there to have a look at an ancient site and was accompanied by a Kashmiri scholar, Chandram Pandit. Just as they were examining a pile of old stones lying among some trees surrounding the site, Chandram suddenly ran away from there screaming in terror. Bühler couldn't understand what happend. Did the man run into a nest of wasps, he thought? No it wasn't a nest of wasps, the terror-stricken Chandram explained, but he had stepped into the shade of a tree known as Vibhitika in Sanskrit, and this was very unfortunate as Kali (the game of dice personified) resided in the tree. "I have become impure" he said, almost crying.

Vibhitika is a tree which has the botanical name of Terminalia Bellrica, and is commonly known as Roxb. It has been mentioned in several Sanskrit texts for the fruit it bears which was used as dice in gambling. The tree has been described in a sukta of the Rigveda which says that when its friuts roll on the table, they enslave the heart of a gambler. In fact, the belief that Kali, the spirit of gambling, resides in the Vibhitika tree, prevailed all over the country. Chandram, learned in Sanskrit lore as he was, had read about the tree and the evil effect it was supposed to carry.

"Poor Pandit!", Buhler must have thought, sympathizing with Chandram.

Input — S. N. Pandita

What is so mystical about the number 'eleven'?

"Kashiri rudy kahay garI', 'Only eleven families remained in Kashmir, — so goes a Kashmiri saying etched deeply on the racial memory of Kashmiri Pandits as it reminds them of a genocidal attack that had wiped out almost the entire Pandit community except a handful in the terrible days of the 14th century Islamic bigot Sikander Butshikan. This is not the only saying in Kashmiri in which the number eleven figures. It occurs in a lot many Kashmiri proverbs and sayings, often with an unpleasant or even an ominous connotation. 'AdI kyazi raavihe kahan gaav?', meaning 'why should the eleven have lost their cow?' This is a line from a verse of the saint poetess Lalleshwari which is often quoted when lack of unity among people is to be emphasised. 'Kaahan gEyi kaah watI' or 'the eleven went in eleven different directions', is another proverb that carries a similar meaning. "Kaahan mEly potran kunuy shraanapat" (Eleven male members of a family having just one loin cloth to share between them) is a proverb used for indicating abject poverty. "Kaahan garan kunIy tE:v',(Only one tawa or baking pan shared by eleven families) is another proverb that suggests economic distress. 'Kaahan kunui shetaan' or 'One devil is more than a match for eleven persons', 'Akh tI akh gEyi kaah tsochi' (' one plus one add up to eleven cakes of bread', are proverbs with a touch of humour.

There are many more Kashmiri proverbs and sayings in which the ubiquitous number features, but not always to denote something ominous or unpleasant like thirteen. For instance 'Kaah nov' or 'the divinity with eleven names,' which Muslims of the valley often invoke for swearing. Unwittingly they invoke the 'Ekadash Rudras' to whom eleven springs lying beneath the foundation of the Shah Hamdan mosque in Srinagar were dedicated. Then there is the 'kaah-kaah pal' — an oval stone lying outside a Bijbehara temple which, it is believed, can be lifted on eleven fingers only — not one less or more!

But why 'eleven'one would like to ask. Why not ten or twelve or thirteen or any other number? One wonders if any numerologist has an answer to that. Or a sociolinguist for that matter. Why have the Kashmiris chosen the number eleven for their proverbs and sayings so repeatedly? Is there anything mystical about it?

— Input : S.N. Pandita

CULTURAL LINKS BETWEEN KASHMIR AND KARNATAKA HIGLIGHTED AT SEMINAR IN MYSORE

A day-long seminar on cultural bonds between Kashmir and Karnataka was organised in Mysore by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in association with N.S. Kashmir Research Institute on October 10, 1999. The audience in the jampacked Govindarao Memorial Hall, listened with rapt attention to the speakers who highlighted various aspects of the relationship.

Welcoming the NSKRI team, the President of VHP, Mysore, Mr.Vishwanathiah lavished praise on scholarship and erudition of Kashmiris and lamented about the present plight of the Kashmiri Hindus.

In his keynote speech, Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, Chairman, NSKRI, took the audience on a journey back to the past when Shaivite thought united Kashmir with the South in a bond of religious and cultural unity. In this context he referred to common elements in Kashmir Shaiva philosopjy and the Urshaiva doctrine of Karnataka saints. Paying rich tributes to the great saint Basvappa, who founded the sect, and other Vachankar poets of Kannada, he pointed to the striking similarities between the life and poetry of Mahadeviakka and Lalleshwari. He also related the legend about the establishment of the Shringeri Math by Adi Shankara who is said to have visited the ancient Sharada Shrine in Kashmir and carried the original idol of the goddess with him.

Dr. Toshkhani said that there must have certainly been some reason why Karnataka had lured the great Sanskrit poet of Kashmir, BiJhana, who composed the famous poetic work 'Vikramankadeva Charita', dedicated to his Chalukyan patron, and also wrote the lyrical masterpiece "Chaurpanchashika". He also referred to the contribution of Sharangdeva, whose father had come to Devagiri from Kashmir, to Indian music. His opus 'Sangeet Ratnakara' is regarded as the best treatise ever written on Indian music, he said.

Dr. Toshkhani regretted that a community that had produced such great men of genius, the Kashmiri Pandits, have today been thrown out of Kashmir, their home for millinea. He invited researchers and scholars from Karnataka to explore more facts about different aspects of the cultural relationship between the two regions, expressing the hope it will be further strengthened in the years to come.

Mr P. N. Kachru, well-known Kashmiri artist and Treasurer, NSKRI, had prepared a well researched paper on the famous shrine of Sharada in Kashmir with detailed drawing imaginatively reconstructing the salient features of the temple. Mr Kachru went into the history of the shrine besides explaining the reasons for its reputation throughout the country. Made of wood, the idol of the goddess, had a miraculousness associated with it. He also referred to the story about Kashmir's Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's visit to the famous shrine and the goddess' refusal to grant him her 'darshan'.

Mr. S. N. Pandita, Secretary, NSKRI, also spoke on the occasion. He talked about the disastrous implicalions for Kashmiri culture of the on-going Pak-supported insurgency in the state. Giving an account of the prevailing situation there, he drew the attention of the audience to NSKRI's resolve to safeguard the cultural identity and heritage of the exiled Kashmiri Hindus. The people of Karnataka, he hoped, will render all assistance to the Institute in this work.

The seminar, which had started with a melodious hymn to Saraswati in Kannada language, concluded with an inspiring and scholarly speech by Mrs. Veena Bapat, Vice-President of VHP's southern zone.

Newsbytes

NSKRI Team Seeks Cooperation from Kashmiri Hindu Samiti, Karnataka

An NSKRI team comprising Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, Mr. P. N. Kachru and Mr. S. N. Pandita held a long and fruitful discussion about the present cultural predicament of the Kashmiri Pandit community with representatives of the Kashmiri Hindu Samiti Karnataka: Mr R. K. Mattoo, President and Mr T. N. Dhar 'Kundan', Editorial Advisor.

During the course of the meeting, which took place in Bangalore at Mr 'Kundan's' residence, the NSKRI team explained to the Samiti office-bearers the Institute's agenda, and the strategy devised by it, to project and preserve Kashmiri Pandit culture and heritage at the most crucial period in the community's history. The cultural identity of the Kashmiri Pandits, the team members said, was under great threat of being wiped off by the inexorable force of circumstances.

Seeking cooperation from the Samiti in procuring, retrieving and preserving Kashmiri Pandit heritage material, available anywhere in Karnataka, Mr Mattoo and Mr 'Kundan' assured the NSKRI team that they would do everything possible to create greater awareness about the problem among members of the Pandit community living in Bangalore and other places in Karnataka. They said that they would lend their fullest support and cooperation to NSKRI whenever it decided to hold an exhibition in that metropolis.

'Shiva Drishti' Exhibition Postponed

Due to unavoidable circumstances 'Shiva Drishti' exhibition scheduled to be held in Feb-March 2000 has been postponed. The exhibition will now be held in August this year to coincide with the annual *'darshan'* at the holy Amarnath Cave.

NSKRI representatives attend HICC seminar

The study of interface between Western and Kashmiri Sanskritists has been an aspect of scholars' pursuit at NSKRI. It was in this connection NSKRI and HICC in Nov '98 jointly organised a seminar-exhibition on Aurel Stein and his association with Kashmiri scholars.

In tune with the success of this event, Hungarian Information and Cultural Centre, on 11th and 12th Nov.,1999 also organised a seminar-exhibition in memory of well known Hungarian Indologist, Sandor Korosi Cosma. The event was attended by Hungarian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Mr Joseref Hamori and Ambassador Andras Dallos, who also addressed the participants.

Appreciating the good work NSKRI has been doing in this regard, a special invitation was extended to it for representation and participation in the seminar-cum-exhibition. Accordingly Mr P. N. Kachru participated in the seminar proceedings. At the inaugural function of exhibition Shri S. N. Pandita in his address referred to Indo-Hungarian Cultural ties and expressed a hope of further strengthening of the ties in the 3rd. millennium to usher greater cooperation leading to closer links between the two countries.

Dr. Geza Bethlenfalvy, Director HICC in his address made a reference to Kashmiri scholars who had guided Stein in his Sanskrit studies in Kashmir by calling them as "his teachers".

Amongst others who participated in the two-day event included Prof. Lokesh Chandra, Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, Dr Margit Kovis and Dr Janos Kubassek. Mr Ananth Kumar, Minister for Culture and Youth Affairs, was the Chief Guest.

A Star in the Asiatic Galaxy

The Asiatic Society of Bengal, remains one of the foremost societies of orienalists of the world. This centre for Asian studies includes everything concerning man and nature within the geographical limits of the continent.

Amongst the great names who patronised it with their great works and enabled the society to attain such reputation include William Jones, Henry Hardinge, Oldham, Hoernle, Grierson, Von Roth, Vogel, Duka, Sylvain Levi, Stein, Sten Konow, Francekie, Vreese, Barnett, Bühler, Kielhorn, Sven Hedin, Knowles, Percy Brown, Toyanbee, Foucher, Monier Williams, Weber and John Marshall.

In this illustrious company was also Shankar Nath Kaul—a Kashmiri Pandit. He is the only Kashmiri to have ever been member of Asiatic Society of Bengal, so far.

Like so many outstanding Kashmiri Pandit scholars and academicians of yesteryears, Pandit Shankar Nath Kaul, too, is today forgotten despite having attained such an honour.

Does anybody care?

— S.N.P.

A page from history

"When I first visited Kashmir in the autumn of 1887, its glory had already begun to depart though as regards simplicity of travelling my methods were the simplest. I had no clothes but what I stood in and only the under portion of these were of English origin. All my outer clothes including my boots were worn out long before I reached Kashmir and I was accordingly clothed in long Central Asian robe of high native boots. For I was at the end of a journey of nearly four thousand miles from Peking. I had crossed and was the first European to accomplish the feat the Mustagh Pass, 19000 feet high in to Baltistan.

I had been able to carry with me little even of the scanty baggage I had brought up to the other side of the Pass. I had indeed only a roll of bedding. I had no tent and no money.

I had slept in the open from one side of the Himalayas to the other and my family were entirely exhausted so that when I landed in Kashmir territory, I had to borrow money from Pandit Radha Kishen Koul a very popular and respected official who is still in the Maharaja's service and is now Chief Judge".

— Sir Francis Young Husband

Kashmir belongs to Kashmiri Pandits

"But let it be said clearly and precisely, Kashmir belongs to Kashmiri Pandits, the original inhabitants of the state and not to the Muslims. To say that Kashmir is Muslim is a negation of history, pandering to the whims of the neo-historians. Kashmir was, is, and shall remain, essentially Hindu".

Excerpt from the book
"Kashmir, From Autonomy to Azadi"
by Gul Mohammed Wani

EDITOR'S DESK

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY - II

In their present state of dispersal and despair Kashmiri Pandits are trying to clutch at any straw that may help them to keep afloat as a distinct people and save them from getting lost in the sea of anonymity threatening to drown them. Today they are more conscious than ever that their identity lies rooted in the Kashmiri language. That explains why Pandit leaders are desperately urging the younger generation not to give up speaking in their mother tongue, at least at home. Of late these appeals appear to have acquired a more intense and urgent tone. While much of it may be just demagogic posturing, the intimate link between the mother tongue and social identification can never be denied.

There is absolutely to doubt about the mother tongue's role in shaping our cognitive faculties and influencing our perception of things. The mother tongue links us with the wit and wisdom of our ancestors, the fragrance of our native soil, the vital life force of our traditions. The mere nuances of its words take us to a warm and intimate world where our fairs and festivals, customs and beliefs, lore and literature, idioms and sayings all blend together to give us joy and nourish our mind and soul. Their intonation rings a chord in our hearts as nothing else does. It is in this context that the anguish of those who fear that our exile could well mean our dislocation from our linguistic habitat as well has to be understood.

Yet, things have been made quite difficult and complex for us by the inexorable pressure of circumstances. While the present generation Pandits may somehow hold on to Kashmiri as a medium of oral communication, the younger generation may not find itself so strongly attached to the umbilical chord of the language for the simple reason of having to interact more and more frequently with non-Kashmiris among whom they have to live and work. Cross-cultural influences from such people are bound to affect them, and for maintaining even professional relations with them they shall have to take recourse to link languages like Hindi or more particularly English which has become a language of prestige, privilege and opportunity throughout the country today thanks to the bludgeoning influence of Western consumerist culture. The post-exodus generation, including kids born sometime before the cataclysmic event, shall have to spend much of their time with non-Kashmiri-speaking peers and pals whether at school or at play. So shall children of such Kashmiri Pandit young men or women as have married outside their community — a tendency that is fast catching on.

This, however, should is no way detract from the importance of the efforts being made to keep the Kashmiri language alive as an essential identity marker of the exiled Pandits. We have before us the fate of those Kashmiri Pandits who at different times in the chequered history of the community left Kashmir due to religious persecution or for seeking greener pastures, and settled in north Indian cities like Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Allahabad, Lahore and Amritsar — all of them ending up losing their language. Most of them found employment at the Mughal courts or courts of other Muslim princes and Nawabs, and adopted the Urdu language and the court culture associated with it. They felt pride in mixing and moving about with Muslim elite of their times and in dressing and eating like them, imitating their etiquette and their ways in every detail. Surely, no one among today's Kashmiri Pandit exiles would like to have a tryst with such a fate.

But are we aware of the fate of the Kashmiri language itself, which we profess to love so much? Of the way it has been wrecked from inside by massive interpolations of Perso-Arabic vocabulary over the years, changing its entire complexion? Has anyone cared to

ponder over the fact that what passes for Kashmiri today is virtually a dialect heavily laden with Persian and Arabic words and expressions? An ancient language that has directly descended from the language of the Vedas has been hybridized to such an extent that it has become almost impossible to recognize its true identity, and yet nobody seems to be concerned. Today the tendency is to use almost any Persian or Arabic word that may suit the whim or idiosyncrasy of the speaker or writer, usually at the cost of real native words—and it has been so for many years now. The result is that original Kashmiri words are becoming obsolete and are being replaced by borrowed lexical items of Perso-Arabic origin cutting it off from its Indo-Aryan moorings. This is happening in case of even most useful and beautiful native words and expressions, because, to quote Prof. S. K. Toshkhani, " the educated men prefer to talk in their hybrid tongue rather than in Kashmiri as it is spoken at home and as it appears in older literary works." This has created an impression in the minds of many non-Kashmiris that the Kashmiri language sounds like an offshoot of some West Asian Semitic tongue, which it is indeed mischievously made out to be by those who hold that it is derived from Hebrew—not on the basis of linguistic facts but on "chance resemblance of sounds" of some stray words.

The fact is that the hybridization of the Kashmiri language, both at the literary and colloquial levels, is a deliberate and planned act of cultural subversion and aggression that has been going on ever since Islam came to Kashmir.

The process began, in fact, with Zain-ul-Abidin who declared Persian as the court language of Kashmir. Persian continued to enjoy this status during the Mughal and Afghan rule till it was replaced by Urdu, its offshoot, by the Dogras. This gave a tremendous setback to Kashmiri and its rightful claim to be made the medium of administration and instruction continued to be overlooked—even after the Dogra rule ended and power came into the hands of the so-called champion of 'Kashmiriat', Sheikh Abdullah, and his National Conference. This was so because Urdu, in which poet Iqbal wrote, was identified with Islam and came to be regarded as an instruement of Islamic cultural resurgence in India. In the eyes of Kashmiri Muslims, the majority community of the Valley, it acquired the same prestige as Persian due to its prolonged use even though all of them spoke their native tongue at home. Choking Kashmiri with Perso-Arabic vocabulary became an obsesion for them, for this could (and did) create the impression that the language has nothing to do with India or Indian linguistic tradition.

After 1947, when the need arose for developing Kashmiri prose for literary usage and for radio programmes, Urdu journalistic terminology was adopted wholesale without caring to even consider the use of existing Kashmiri equivalents of such terms. Nor did anyone give as much as a thought to looking at the Kashmiri word hoard and the language's ability to form derivatives from its own roots and bases. Unfortunately, the committee set up to formulate the language policy of Radio Kashmir was headed by a Kashmiri Pandit and its recommendations were in full conformity with the views of those who worked for the imposition of semitic linguistic features on Kashmiri. Needless to say, this made official Kashmiri a completely artificial language having nothing to do with its actual spoken form. The original identity and character of Kashmiri were thus buried under heavily overcast strata of non-native words.

It is a pity that Kashmiri Pandits failed to understand the motive and implication of this cultural invasion and subversion of the linguistic realities of Kashmiri. Instead, they acquiesced in it and ensured its success, especially the intelligentsia and writers. The result is that today thousands of original native words and expressions have gone out of use and become obsolete.

To adapt a well- known Kashmiri phrase, 'the foreign words have chased away the native words'. If the process continues, as it is likely to, we will be soon left with no original Kashmiri words and, as in works like Mahamad Gami's 'Yusuf Zuleikha' and other Kashmiri mathnavis (plagiarized from Persian originals), we shall be using sentences that contain "strings of Persian vocables held together by an occasional Kashmiri inflection or verb or verb substansive". This is a far cry from the language used only a few decades back. This kind of overhybridization has virtually turned Kashmiri into a sterile language incapable of forming new terms and derivatives from its own words and bases.

The vocabulary of a language, according to Chomsky, reflects the characteristic pursuits and interests of a society which uses it. It fulfils the functions it is called upon to in the context of the culture it as operates in.

"Kashmiri literature", as Dr. Braj B. Kachru has rightly pointed out, "has developed in a bicultural context", resulting in great divergence between the dialects of Hindus and Muslims after Lal Ded and Sheikh Noor ul-Din. Since 1947, however, with prose becoming a dominant medium of literary expression, this divergence was unilaterally minimised by Hindu Kashmiris who abdicated progressively in favour of the Muslim dialect,just to acquire uniformity, and adopted the stylistic, phonetic and lexical peculiarities of Persianized and Arabicized Kashmiri. Thus even in colloquial Kashmiri, the simple 'beyi' became 'mazid', 'zon' became 'naphar', 'path kal' became 'mazi', 'gurnI' became 'E:rak' 'syatha' became 'intihE:yi' 'kunuy' became 'vE:hid', 'beni' became 'hamshira' and so on. This despite the richness of Kashmiri in words for abstract ideas.

The exodus could have provided the Kashmiri Pandits an opportunity to draw the line and restore to Kashmiri its basic Indo- Aryan character by removing such abominable interpolation. But hardly anyone seems to care. Whenever the editor of this newsletter had the occasion to point this out, he was dubbed as a purist. Didn't he know, he was told, that even advanced languages like English have borrowed words from other languages. Fortunately, being a student of linguistics, the editor of this newsletter is not such an ignoramus. He knows fully well that all languages borrow words from other languages and incorporate them in their vocabulary. No linguistic area can remain insulated from influences. Kashmiri too has borrowed a large number of Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and even English words and these have become a part of its lexicon. But borrowing a few lexical items is one thing and incorporating whole terminologies in a way that the identity of the borrowing language gets totally submerged is quite another. It is to the latter that we object to, for such borrowings have been made uncritically with the mischievous intent of altering its basic character.

We shall, therefore, continue to assert that while trying preserving their mother tongue, the diaspora Pandits have got to exorcise it of extraneous and unnecessary elements reminiscent of their cultural enslavement.

As a first step let us stop using Persio-Arabic substitutes for terms for which original words exist in Kashmiri. Next, we should survey the entire word-hoard of the language—at least of such words as have been in existence for the last one hundred years or so. And lastly, scholars should sit together and think how roots and bases of words taken from this hoard can be used to form new derivatives and terms in accordance with the actual genius and nature of Kashmiri. They should take care to cover different areas of knowledge so that Kashmiri can really develop as a modern language fit for both emotive and discursive expression.

(Concluded)

Response

The Laukika or the Saptarishi Era

'Unmesh', as usual is as informative and interesting as ever. I am sending herewith my comments in respect of "Laukika or Saptarishi Samvat".

New Year (Navreh) is celebrated in Kashmir, as in many other parts of India, on the 1st Shudi of the month of Chaitra, as per lunar calendar. The Hindu calendar, however, is luni-solar, incorporating both lunar and solar calculations. Kaliyug or the Kali era is said to have started 26 years before Parikshit ascended the throne when Pandavas (Yudhishthir, his brothers and Draupadi) left for the Himalayas on what was their last pilgrimage.

The Saptarishi era is the same as the Laukika era mentioned in Kalhana's Rajatarangini. It is said to have started on the 1st Shudi of Chaitra in the 26th year of Kali era. Kalhana mentions 3889 Laukika as the year when King Chipatta Jayapida died, giving for the first time a precise date of a historical event. From this date onwards, which corresponds to March 513 AD, he gives accurate dates of the Laukika era till the year 4223 when he completed his Rajatarangini, which comes to 1140-50 AD.

Much credit goes to Aurel Stein and George Buhler for explaining the precise chronology of Kalhana. In the coming Chaitra this year the Kali era will enter the 5102nd year of its commencement. This corresponds to 2057 of the Vikrami Samvat or 5076 of the Saptarishi Samvat.

Thus at a time when the Western world is excited over the commencement of the 21st century, we Hindus in India will have completed 51 centuries of the Kali era and will be looking forward to the 52nd century with hope and aspiration.

As Dr. Karan Singh pointed out to Helga Klein, representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the Asia and Pacific Regional Conference on Education for Human Rights in Pune, sometime in February, 1999, "the 21st century is no big deal for us. We have a civilization that goes back thousands of years, and Buddhist calendars go back even before the birth of Christ."

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Circulation Office of 'Unmesh' shifted

The Circulation Office of 'Unmesh', which was located at 92/A, Prateek Market, Munirka, New Delhi, has now been shifted to A/75, Main Road Masoodpur, New Delhi - 110 070. The registered address of the editorial section, however, remains unchanged. Readers are requested to note.

– M.L. Pandit

Interesting and Informative

I first came to know about Nityanand Shastri Kashmir Research Institute from Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Srinagar where I happened to see an issue of 'Unmesh'. The contents of this magazine are really very interesting and informative.

Chander M. Bhat
Inspector Post Offices (Planning),
Jammu and Kashmir Circle,
Srinagar-190 001

Valuable Information About Kashmiri Pandit Culture

I am thankful to you for sending me 'Unmesh'. It contains valuable information about Kashmiri culture and traditions. I really feel happy to go through the contents of this newsletter which keep me abreast of facts about the glorious past of Kashmir and Kashmiri Pandits. I thank you very much for the efforts you are making to keep the Kashmiri traditions alive.

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'उन्मेष' — एक गंभीर प्रयास

'उन्मेष' के दो–एक अंक मिले। मन प्रसन्न हुआ। आभार। यह एक गंभीर प्रयास है। और सबके बूते की बात नहीं। ....पत्रिका की प्रस्तुति, खोजपूर्ण contents, इसे एक गंभीर सांस्कृतिक कर्म का रुतबा देते हैं। कम से कम निर्वासन में हमें सभी पहलुओं पर इतना ही गंभीर हो जाना चाहिए था।

डॉ. अग्निशेखर
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'उन्मेष' बहुत प्रेरणा दे रहा है

नये नये आकर्षक रंग में, ज्ञान से निखरा 'उन्मेष' मिलता रहता है और बहुत प्रेरणा दे रहा है कुछ करने की। यह अति प्रसन्नता की बात है कि विद्वद्जन महान कार्य में निष्ठा से जुड़े हैं कठिनाइयों में भी।

स्वरूप नारायण
विजय नगर
गाज़ियाबाद

यद्यपि जग दारुण दुःख नाना
सब तें कठिन जाति अवमाना।
— तुलसीदास

NSKRI pays homage to the departed

Since the last issue of 'Unmesh' appeared, our community has lost several eminent persons in quick succession. The departure in a short span of time of those who have contributed in various ways to enriching our intellectual and cultural life, has left all of us in a state of shock and sorrow. With hearts overwhelmed by grief, we at the NSKRI join the entire community in paying our tearful homage to them.

Artist and art critic Manohar Kaul was so full of dynamism that one could never imagine that he would bid the world his final adieu so soon. As Chairman of All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS), he galvanized the art scene in Delhi and as editor of the art journal 'Kala Darshan' he helped in providing a forum for expression of different views on subjects relating to Indian art and artists. His books: "Trends in Indian Painting — Ancient, Medieval, Modern", which covered the history of Indian paintings from ancient times to our own day, and "Kashmir: Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim Architecture", were received well and commented widely upon in art circles. But more than a writer on art, Manohar Kaul had achieved considerable reputation for his artistic creativity, his paintings capturing the essence of nature and transmuting it into art. Kaul's several solo and group shows — the last having been held in April 1998— were acclaimed by art critics and art lovers alike. He showed his ingenuity in the use of both oil and water colour as medium. But more than anything else he will be remembered for presenting on his canvases nostalgic memories of Kashmir's ethereal landscape - the mountains, the meadows, the streams, the trees, all glowing in luminous colours. NSKRI will never forget the help he rendered in organising 'Unmeelan', the first ever exhibition on Kashmiri Pandit cultural heritage. His passing away has filled our minds with a sense of great loss.

The news of Umesh Kaul's sudden and untimely demise came as a tremendous shock to his numerous friends and admirers. It is difficult to stereotype Umesh's genius under any single tag — he started as a short-story writer, took up paint and brush to become one of Kashmir's top painters, distinguished himself as a broadcaster, had a stint as a journalist, wrote scripts for documentary films. But above everything else he was a wonderful man, loveable, restlessly creative, highly talented and thoroughly gentle. He bowled over everyone who ever came in contact with him with his sparkling wit and genial nature.

Umesh created a sensation in Kashmiri literary circles in the late fifties when he made his debut as a short-story writer in Urdu with *Yaqoot*. And after writing a few short stories in Urdu and establishing himself as a master stylist in that language, he switched over to Kashmiri and produced memorable pieces like *Yus Wari Khywan Chhu* and *Adnuk Shreh*. But just when his Kashmiri short stories were attracting wide admiration, he surprised everyone by suddenly stopping writing. It was not that his talent as a short-story writer had expended itself, but the restless genius in him was looking for a new medium for expression. And this he found as a broadcaster when he joined the All India Radio as a script writer to become later a producer of memorable and unique programmes. And unique Umesh was in many ways. It is a different thing, however, that he took his intellectual and creative endowments lightly, not caring for their full flowering.

The uprootment of Kashmiri Pandits from their hearths and homes had a devastating effect on Umesh Kaul. A left-leaning progressive throughout his life, he now became a bitterly disillusioned man. The savagery of the Islamist fundamentalists shattered many of his long held beliefs. As an exile living in Faridabad with his younger brother Hriday Kaul Bharti, also an eminent Kashmiri short-story writer, Umesh took more and more to exploring his cultural roots. It was in this state of mind that he promised NSKRI to write for 'Unmesh', but could not keep the promise due to his illness.

The NSKRI family conveys its deep and heartfelt sympathy to Umesh Kaul's bereaved younger brothers, Hriday Kaul Bharti and Bhushan Kaul in this hour of their grief.

'उन्मेष' के पाठकों के लिए

'नवरेह'

(नववर्ष ५०७६ सप्तर्षि संवत्)

मंगलमय और

प्रेरणादायक हो।

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